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PROGRAM This Week with David Brinkley STATION WJLA-TV
ABC Network

DATE March 16, 1986 11:30 A.M. CITY Washington, D.C.

SUBJECT Soviet Delegation to United Nations

DAVID BRINKLEY: Is the Russian delegation top the United States in New York a crowded nest of spies, tapping phones, reading mail, stealing every secret that is not nailed down? The U.S. Government says so, says there is so much spying, the FBI cannot keep track of it, that the Russian delegation is far bigger than it needs to be, and so some of its members have to be sent home.

Or is it possible that so many Russians are eager to work in the U.N. in New York because it is close to Bloomingdale's, consumer goods not available in Moscow?

And, does the U.S. have the right to order 105 Russians sent hom?

We'll ask all of this of today's guests: Ambassador Vassiliy Safronchuk, acting representative of the Soviet Union to the United Nations; Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, formerly American Abassador to the U.N.; Senator William S. Cohen of the Select Committee on Intelligence; and Richard Helms, former Director of the CIA.

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BRINKLEY: There are a good many functionaries, apparatchiks and paper-shufflers at the U.N. from many countries, but they don't bother anybody. The Soviet delegation, however, has all of those, plus a great many others. And the U.S. charge is that many of them are spies, stealing or buying at fire-sale prices military and other secrets.

Before we ask our guests what's going on here, some

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background information from Jack Smith.

JACK SMITH: David, this is the Soviet Mission to the United Nations here in New York. Some 275 Soviets work here, many more than Moscow actually needs, says the U.S., because many of them actually work as spies. And so the U.S. now says that some of them will have to go home.

CHARLES REDMAN: After the reductions have been achieved, the Soviet Mission will still be the largest in the United Nations and will have sufficient personnel, 170, to conduct legitimate U.N. business.

SMITH: The reduction actually affects three Soviet U.N. Missions, one representing Moscow, and one each for Byelorussia and the Ukraine, two of the Soviet Union's 15 republics. The nearly 40 percent cut in staff is to take place over two years.

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE CASPAR WEINBERGER: There's just no question that the only reason that those people are there is because they are accomplished espionage agents trained as spies.

SMITH: The move was none too soon for some and not enough for others.

SENATOR DANIEL PATRICK MOYNIHAN: The real problem is that the Soviet Mission at the United Nations, for some 14 years now, has systematically been invading the telephone system of the New York region.

SMITH: A maze of sophisticated listening devices atop Soviet diplomatic facilities in the United States allows the Soviets to monitor naval communications, U.S. business and government conversations, and even ordinary Americans on the telephone.

The U.S. move is aimed at human intelligence-gathering. While the U.S. has just over 200 diplomats in the Soviet Union, the Soviets have roughly a thousand trade officials and diplomats over here, several thousand when their East Bloc allies are counted in. And U.S. counterintelligence has estimated that 40 percent or more engage in espionage.

MAN: The FBI finds itself overburdened with thousands of people that literally have to be monitored, in one way or another; and the Bureau is not up to it. And I think that's one of the motivating factors in reducing the size of the Soviet U.N. Mission.

SMITH: Another factor, say U.S. officials, was the arrest last year of the Walker family on charges of spying for

the Soviets and the large number of other Americans caught spying last year.

The decision to cut the Soviet U.N. mission was actually made six months ago, according to some officials, but the move was delayed first by the Geneva Summit and then by last month's Soviet Party Congress.

The delay did not soften the reaction. Last weekend the Soviets described the U.S. move as:

MAN: Totally arbitrary, unfounded, and hostile towards the Soviet Union.

SMITH: By Tuesday, when a formal protest was delivered to U.S. diplomats in Moscow and broadcast on Soviet TV, the language got more specific. "The U.S. must be aware," said the statement, "that such actions by no means create a favorable background for a summit meeting." In spite of the threat, though, few think that the U.S. move, by itself, will affect this year's on-again, off-again summit with the Russians.

SECRETARY OF STATE GEORGE SHULTZ: It has no connection whatever with any thought about the next meeting.

By targeting the Soviets' U.N. Mission and not their Embassy, the U.S. effectively removed the issue from the realm of bilateral relations and may have avoided what happened to British Prime Minister Thatcher last year when she expelled 25 Soviet Embassy diplomats for spying. Two days later Moscow threw out 25 Britons. So Thatcher expelled six more Soviets. But Moscow then retaliated by throwing out six Britons. Prime Minister Thatcher finally put a halt to the cycle of expulsions.

This week Moscow did expel an American diplomat from the U.S. Embassy, alleging he'd been caught spying. But the State Department refused comment, and there was no immediate indication if the expulsion was linked to the U.S. move against the Soviets' U.N. Mission. Some this week doubted there'd be any open retaliation.

MAN: Had we done this to the Embassy in Washington, they might have retaliated. But the U.N. is a special situation, and I think on this one they'll be careful, because they want the U.N. to turn on the United States.

SMITH: Indeed, by Thursday, the Soviets were already moving in that direction and had called a meeting of the U.N.'s Host Country Committee to protest the U.S. move. The U.N. is still studying the affair, but it's already questioned the legality of what the U.S. did. The 1947 agreement setting up the

U.N. in New York allows individual diplomats to be removed for proven misconduct, but says nothing about whole blocks of diplomats whose nations are accused of misconduct. A technicality, but still, say U.S. legal scholars who sympathize with the move, a fact.

MAN: To try to deal with the problem abruptly and without a clear legal foundation may be the kind of solution that will come back to haunt us when we find ourselves vulnerable to similar action by other host governments, or find our friends vulnerable.

SMITH: Legal or not, getting a black eye in the United Nations is not going to make the Administration unpopular in the U.S. And even if the move does not stop Soviet spying here, it has probably already made some Americans feel better.

BRINKLEY: Coming next, Richard Helms, formerly Director of the CIA.

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BRINKLEY: Mr. Helms, thanks very much for coming in today. As always, a pleasure to have you here with us.

RICHARD HELMS: Delighted to be here.

BRINKLEY: Here with us are George Will of ABC News, and Sam Donaldson, ABC News White House correspondent.

Now, Mr. Helms, the CIA's mission is, and always was, intelligence outside the United States, of course. But the U.N., being an international agency, sort of crosses that barrier, I gather. So what can you tell us about the Russian spying? Is it as bad as we're told?

HELMS: Well, I would think it was. And the thing that has impressed me is that President Reagan, at long last, has made a right and proper step in starting to reduce the size of the Soviet Mission to the United Nations.

When one considers that the 275, roughly, individuals that they have there is more than the combined total of the next two largest delegations, which is the United States and the PRC -- in other words, the United States has 126 people, roughly; the Chinese have 116. That makes a total of 242. So 275 against 242 does seem rather outlandish, quite frankly.

Over and above that, this Soviet Mission to the United Nations has doubled in size in the last two decades. So I'm really quite surprised that some President before President

Reagan hasn't asked that they be reduced in size. Because what are they there to do?

If other delegations can get along with the numbers they have, particularly the United States and the Chinese, what are these other Russians doing? It's obvious that they're up to some kind of nefarious work, espionage or something similar. And this is something that I don't think we have to put up with.

DONALDSON: You once told us -- in fact, I think the last time you were on this broadcast -- though, that everybody does it. And you were making a case that we shouldn't be so shocked and upset because of one set of spying -- I think we were talking about an alleged Israeli spy ring at that time.

HELMS: That's correct.

DONALDSON: So if everyone does it, why should...

HELMS: Everyone does it. But I think there's reason on the scale. I mean this is just too much of a much, and it's making it very difficult for the FBI to protect our interests.

Suppose that you send three men out as agents one morning and they all go in different directions. Now, the fellow that's trying to protect our country, the FBI agent, has to follow all three to find out what they're up to. Now, if you reduce the number, it reduces the problem.

Obviously, espionage is going to go on until the last Russian has left, if you like. But I do think that this has gotten outlandish.

DONALDSON: Sir, if I can just -- so your complaint is not necessarily that the Soviets spy, but that there are too many of them and we can't keep up with them. By reducing the number of spies, it gives us an opportunity to follow them and to make certain we know what they're doing.

HELMS: That's right. And I'd like to see us reduce it even more. When they finish, they're still going to have more than we do and more than the Chinese. Even when we get down to 170, there are going to be more than our delegation or more than the Chinese delegation. So they've still got a sizable advantage. I'd like to see them cut down to about the same that we are.

GEORGE WILL: You just said that the size of the U.N. Mission of the Soviet Union grew like Topsy in the last 20 years or so, and it is obvious that they're up to no good. I have a feeling our next guest is going to say, "Perfect nonsense. We're there to promote world peace."

What do we know for sure, and how do we know? How do we identify that these people are indeed in the espionage business?

HELMS: Well, the FBI and the CIA obviously keep records on people they have identified as either KGB or GRU. In other words, both Soviet intelligence organizations, their representatives around the world in various places. Some of them come to the United States, some of them we identify here, and records are kept.

And actually, the FBI and CIA are more conservative about the number of Russian spies in this country than Shevchenko was in his book. You will recall he said about half the people at the Soviet Mission to the United Nations were spies. The current estimate of the FBI and CIA is about 30 to 35 percent. Well, that's a third, and that's plenty.

WILL: Okay. In other words, we know who's paying their salaries. We know who they belong to.

HELMS: That's right.

WILL: Now, obviously, one thing we can do about this is what's been done. We can improve the ratio of our surveillance people to their operatives. What else can we do?

HELMS: Well, not very much. And so -- that's why I'm so in favor of cutting back, cutting back, reducing the number of people, because I don't see why we have to have an FBI that's absolutely enormous to follow the Russians around. We've got enough crime, drug problems, auto thefts, Mafias, and so forth, in this country for the FBI to deal with without having to have as large a delegation as they do in New York to deal just with the Russian spying.

WILL: Does the growth of the Soviet interest in this kind of operation, as manifested by the growing size of their U.N. Mission, tell us something important about what's going on in the Soviet Union? Why this increase, I gather, increased emphasis on espionage?

HELMS: I don't think there's any question that this is a desire to steal from us the high-tech secrets that we're continuing to invent. In other words, we're always keeping a step ahead of the Russians in the area of technology. They're terribly anxious to keep up with us. And one of the easiest ways to do it is to steal from us, the way that you do this, either the equipment or the diagrams.

WILL: So you would expect a correlation of increased espionage with decreased economic vitality of the Soviet Union.

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HELMS: I would think so. I don't think there's any doubt that they're feeling hard pressed, otherwise they wouldn't do this.

DONALDSON: The Soviets may very well introduce reciprocity now and ask us to reduce our U.S. Embassy in Moscow, although the two are not exactly similar. What does that do for us?

HELMS: Well, Sam, this is something we ought to keep straight. The Russian Embassy in Washington, the American Embassy in Moscow, they are the ones that are supposed to deal in bilateral relations between the two countries. They are not affected by what's at the United Nations. That's supposed to be an international organization and could be located in Buenos Aires or Calcutta or Vienna, for all of that. So that we mustn't get these two things mixed up. There are certain regulations we have that guide the Soviet Embassy in Washington, but they don't apply to...

DONALDSON: I'm not getting them mixed up. But the Soviets will retaliate in some way. I mean that has been their pattern. I would be surprised if they simply accept this with sort of a little complaint publicly.

So, does it harm us if we lose some significant number of our diplomatic strength in Moscow?

HELMS: It will not help us. But on the other hand, you know, we could hand most of the information about the United States to the Soviets for free, in the press, on the television and our technical journals.

DONALDSON: You mean their spies are not as effective as ours because they can get it out of the newspaper.

HELMS: It isn't that so much. They've got certain specific things they want to get ahold of that we're not putting in the newspaper.

WILL: Would it be in the United States interest to move the U.N.?

[Confusion of voices]

HELMS: It would be just jolly to have the U.N. in Vienna, for example, where these Soviets could wander around having coffee and cream and all those pleasant things there.

The Soviets don't want to move the United Nations out of New York because it's very convenient for them to have them. And I don't think they're going to press us too hard on this.

BRINKLEY: Thank you, Mr. Helms. Thanks very much. Thanks for coming.

Coming next, Vassiliy Safronchuk, acting permanent representative of the Soviet Union to the United Nations.

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BRINKLEY: Mr. Safronchuk, in New York, thank you very much for coming in today, talking with us. Pleased to have you with us.

VASSILIIY SAFRONCHUK: Thank you, David.

BRINKLEY: Now, you are aware, of course, the United States is complaining that the Soviet delegation to the United Nations is bigger than that of the United States and China combined. So, tell us, why do you need so many people there?

SAFRONCHUK: Well, David, first of all, I heard what was said before me, and I must quite categorically state that all this talk about spying and Soviet personnel being engaged in the activities unrelated to the United Nations is utter nonsense. And I must state quite categorically that we deny all that.

It may sound like a good fiction, the style of Ian Fleming, but it has nothing to do with reality. The Soviet Mission is engaged completely in the activities of the United Nations aimed at maintaining peace and international security.

With regard to the size of the mission, you should take into account the amount of work. This is the only criteria which can be used. If you look at the United Nations agenda you will find out that half of all the issues of the agenda were initiated by the Soviet Union. These issues are vitally important. These issues are the issues of disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament, maintenance of peace, resolving the regional conflicts, maintaining the orderly relations among nations, and to -- this is quite evident, that it was the Soviet Mission which was directly engaged in promoting and initiating all these vitally important issues.

WILL: Mr. Ambassador, your position is that the Soviet people are needed because they're awfully busy, that the American charges are rubbish, that the American action is illegal.

Are you going to obey it?

SAFRONCHUK: Yes, this is correct statement of our position. As I said, we are busy only with the United Nations activities, and with no other activities. No evidence has ever

been produced by anybody that we are engaged in anything else. All the statements we have heard today, they are just statements without any proof whatsoever.

WILL: But Mr. Ambassador, therefore, are you going to obey the United States directive about reducing the size of your mission?

SAFRONCHUK: The United States directives are illegal, they are unlawful, and they run counter to the existing norms of international law, particularly the headquarters agreement of 1947, the Vienna Convention of 1975, which rules the relations between the missions and the United Nations organization. And they run counter to the legal opinion of International Law Commission, which says that only the missions have the right to establish their structure and the numerical strength of their mission.

WILL: Are you going to obey it?

SAFRONCHUK: Well, we will certainly discuss it with the United Nations Secretary General. It is his business, not the United States Government's business. We are not accredited to the United States Government, we are accredited to the United Nations.

DONALDSON: Mr. Ambassador, in the final analysis, of course, you'll have to do what Washington wants you to do.

My question is, what will Moscow do in retaliation?

SAFRONCHUK: Well, missions to the United Nations are in unique position. They cannot retaliate, because they are accredited to the international organization. And in this case, the United Nations is used by the United States as a whipping boy because...

DONALDSON: I'm not talking about -- sir, I'm not talking about the mission to the United States.

SAFRONCHUK: We do not consider this act as act which is against us. It is the United Nations as a whole. It is against all the missions of the United Nations.

DONALDSON: So you're saying...

SAFRONCHUK: We brought our complaint to the Host Country Committee, and the Host Country [Committee] is going to discuss it next week again, and we will see what will happen at that time.

DONALDSON: Well, are you -- let me get this clear. Are

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you saying that because you believe the complaint is one before the United Nations, that you don't think Mr. Gorbachev and people in Moscow will take any unilateral action against the United States?

SAFRONCHUK: Well, I'm not going to comment on our bilateral relations and on what steps my government is going to take. I am here at the United Nations and I'm supposed to take steps here in the United Nations. And because this act is utterly illegal and this runs counter to the [unintelligible] of the United States, in accordance with the Headquarters Agreement, we are going to take steps here at the United Nations.

BRINKLEY: Well, Mr. Safronchuk, you say that the U.S. charge that some of your people at the U.N. are spies is nonsense.

SAFRONCHUK: Absolutely.

BRINKLEY: We have two Americans who have pleaded guilty to selling American secrets to Russian people who were at the U.N.

SAFRONCHUK: Well, what kind of Russian people? First of all, whatever charges were brought before us, before that, were proven to be complete false statements and complete false evidence. So, what new evidence you are talking about? There is no evidence, as I said. It has never been produced before.

DONALDSON: Mr. Safronchuk, do you think that this act will in any way affect the timing or the probability of a second summit meeting between Mr. Gorbachev and President Reagan?

SAFRONCHUK: Well, I must say that this is a strictly bilateral affair, the forthcoming summit meeting. And I am afraid of being again accused that I interfere into the business which has nothing to do with the United Nations. That is the bilateral relation.

But I must say that certainly this illegal decision of the U.S. Government will not help to create favorable conditions for the summit meeting.

WILL: Let me ask just two questions, one of which for the fourth time.

Are you saying, really, that you're not going to obey this illegal nonsense, as you describe it, the United States position?

SAFRONCHUK: I didn't say anything of the kind. I said

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that we lodged our complaint against the illegal, unlawful decision of the U.S. Government with an appropriate U.N. body. And this body is going to deliberate on this complaint, and we'll find out what to do.

WILL: Mr. Helms just said that you people really like the U.N. in the United States because it's convenient there. But one way to protest the misdeeds, as you see them, of the host country would be to move the U.N. outside of a superpower, move it to, let's say, a Third World country. Would you be in favor of that?

SAFRONCHUK: Well, we will go along with the decision of the United Nations if the decision is taken to that effect. But you are quite right that questions are raised in the United Nations why to stay in the country which systematically violates its own obligations to the international organizations which are situated here in New York. And this is the case. And if the majority of the United Nations members will go with that decision and approve it, we'll certainly support it too.

BRINKLEY: Mr. Safronchuk, thank you very much. Thank you for coming in and talking with us today.

Coming next, Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan of New York, formerly the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations; and Senator William Cohen of Maine, of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence.

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BRINKLEY: ...Senator Moynihan, until you came to the Senate, you were Ambassador to the United Nations. Tell us, what did you actually see or actually know of Russian spying at the U.N.?

SENATOR MOYNIHAN: Well, the first thing I was told when I got the assignment, Nelson Rockefeller called me into his office in Washington, pulled down the blinds and closed the doors, and said, "Now, the one thing that you've got to know is that the Soviets will be listening to every telephone conversation you make from the Waldorf Towers." I thought he was telling me a secret. It wasn't until about ten years ago I realized he'd published it in a book, the Rockefeller Commission, then-Governor Reagan was a member, that the phone-tapping that you talked about earlier is just -- and Jack Smith showed the apparatus -- is just widespread. It's getting worse. And it's an outrage.

The second thing that happened to me. It was on my watch, you might say, that Arkady Shevchenko, then-Undersecretary

of the United Nations for Political Affairs, defected to us. It remained something unknown to the public or to the Soviets for about two years. He told us everything, and most particularly about the one clear violation of the Charter, Article 100 of the Charter, the degree to which the Soviets use U.N. personnel for plain-out espionage. The governing -- they give directions in the most direct manner to their employees. They use them as spies.

A young man, Paul Brown, who works for me, was at the Columbia Law -- Columbia Journalism School about ten years ago. And a Soviet librarian from the U.N. tried to recruit him. He went to the FBI and they had him continue doing this. He said, at the time, it seemed silly to him that they would try to recruit him. But then, ten years later, he's working for a Senator who's on the Intelligence Committee. Not so silly.

The main thing is, these are violations of the Charter. And I'm sorry to disagree with the Ambassador, but the Headquarters Agreement specifically states that behavior outside official duties is governed by American law. And tapping telephones is a violation of our law.

I only wish the Administration had said what they're doing. I mean, after all, they're doing it not just to -- they're not just collecting secrets. They're listening in...

DONALDSON: Let me ask you about the timing of this. Senator Cohen, let me begin with you.

We're told that the President actually made this decision six months ago, to reduce the Soviet U.N. Mission, but, because of the forthcoming Geneva Summit, held his hand. Well, if there was a reason to hold his hand before the Geneva Summit, why do it now, in anticipation of a Washington Summit?

SENATOR WILLIAM COHEN: Well, frankly, I might take the opposite tack and say if the Soviet Union is interested in promoting the spirit of Geneva, they might undertake to unilaterally reduce the outrageous number of people they have here in terms of -- in the name of equity.

We use the term "rough equivalence" in dealing with arms control, reduction of missiles on both sides. What the United States is simply seeking to do is to have a rough parity or rough equivalency test applied to personnel.

So it would seem to me, in this era of Gramm-Rudman, the Soviet Union might take into account that we have a problem here. We can either tax the American people to employ more FBI personnel, or we can reduce the number of Soviet they have to follow

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and to watch and to monitor. And so it would seem to me, in the interest of the Gramm-Rudman reductions that the people are accpeting across the board, from Medicare/Medicaid reductions and child health/nutrition programs, that the Soviet Union might help us achieve our reduction efforts by reducing their personnel.

DONALDSON: That's sort of a wish that will never come true.

Senator Moynihan, how about you? Why do we do it now? Why didn't we do it six months ago?

SENATOR MOYNIHAN: Well, we've been pressing. I have had a bill in for ten years. It passed the Senate 97-to-1. My good friend Bill Cohen voted with me -- to say for the FBI to locate these people and eventually, the bill said, tell them to get out of the country. They're violating our constitutional rights. The government has a responsibility...

DONALDSON: Senator, if I may -- I stipulate what you're saying. But why did we do it now? Why not do it six months ago, or why not wait another six months?

SENATOR COHEN: Could I just respond to that, Sam?

First of all, Congress has been initiating action in this field for well over a year. We have a Leahy-Cohen proposal that passed last year dealing with the reduction in diplomatic personnel within our embassies, both in Moscow and here in the United States. This was a follow-on. There has been a bill pending, S-1733, which is now before the Congress...

DONALDSON: So I take it both of you feel it should have been done a long time ago, and the question of timing is really irrelevant.

SENATOR MOYNIHAN: Well, it may be that -- listen, a Cohen-Leahy bill, my bill -- Congress doesn't like this and is telling the Administration.

WILL: Senator Cohen, is it conceivable, in your judgment, having heard what the Soviet Ambassador just said, that they will not obey the U.S. directive, on the grounds that it's illegal and the charges are false?

SENATOR COHEN: Well, it's conceivable they might take that position. But frankly, beyond the express violations that are occurring that Senator Moynihan has just pointed out, there is a provision in Public Law 357, in the Article 6, which says that nothing contained in the agreement dealing with the United States serving as host nation shall in any way abridge the right

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of the United States to protect its own national security.

Now, if you follow the logic of the Ambassador, it would seem to me that the more paperwork generated by the Soviets, the more peaceful initiatives they take in the United Nations, it would seem to me they could then argue, "We need 500 personnel," or a thousand. And that simply is intolerable.

So I think that, under our own law, Public Law 357, we have the right to protect our own national security interests. And I would say, in spite of anything the Ambassador has said, it is not a violation of the U.N. Charter. And in fact, we will see to it that it's enforced. They may choose to disagree...

BRINKLEY: Senator Cohen, Senator Moynihan has told us that in the quarters the U.S. maintains for its ambassador in the Waldorf Towers, his phone was tapped. Now, do you, does your Intelligence Committee know anything specific to add to this list of high crimes?

SENATOR COHEN: I think the Intelligence Committee is satisfied -- or I should say the intelligence community is satisfied that the Soviets are engaged in widespread gathering of conversations, whether by wiretap or a through a very sophisticated...

SENATOR MOYNIHAN: Microwave.

SENATOR COHEN: ...microwave system operating both out of Washington, San Francisco, with a station down in Havana.

So, we're well aware the conversations are in fact monitored on a daily basis.

WILL: Senator Moynihan...

BRINKLEY: Well, here in Washington they've got so much microwave going from the embassy, it's interfering with television reception in the neighborhood, we are told.

George, go ahead.

WILL: Well, Senator Moynihan, this is about the third time on this show you've made this vigorous plea for the President to do something about it. You two Senators sitting right there. Get 48 more, and the Congress could start to do something about it.

Couldn't Congress stipulate that either the wiretapping stops or they go home?

SENATOR MOYNIHAN: Well, we have done that. The Senate

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has, this legislation I've been pressing. But the Administration always makes us drop it in conference. And I think maybe now that this is out in the open, they will. And I hope they will.

And I might say that, you know, it's in the interests of the government. The President sent a major message to Congress on Friday, a real state paper. He kept referring to the United Nations in it. And we need that U.N. And if we let that U.N. Secretariat be systematically debauched by Soviet, and probably Chinese, spies, we'll lose it as an institution, and we'll miss it.

I might say, if I can, for the record, that the United States is absolutely meticulous in keeping its commitment, under Article 100 of the Charter, not to use U.S. employees in the U.N. for our government purposes, whatever. Our hands are clean. And we have a right to act, and I think a need to do.

BRINKLEY: Senator Moynihan and Senator Cohen, thank you very much for coming in and giving us your thoughts on this subject.